

Grace Defended.

A CENSURE
ON THE

Angodliness,

By which the Glorious

GRACE of **G O D**,
is too commonly Abused.

A SERMON Preached on the
Twenty-fifth Day of December, 1712.

Containing Some SEASONABLE
Admonitions of Piety.

And Concluded, with a brief DISSERTATION
on that CASE, *Whether the Penitent Thief on
the Cross, be an Example of one Repenting at the
LAST HOUR, and on such a Repentance
received unto Mercy?*

By **Cotton Mather**, D. D.

Isai. lviii. 1. Cry aloud, Spare not.

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On the **Twenty-fifth** of
December, 1712. BOSTON-Lecture.

JUDE 4.

**Ungodly Men, turning the Grace
of our God into Wantonness.**

WHat ? And so Early, such Unhappy
Men and Things *Creep* into the
Churches of God ! It seems
Christian Churches cannot Easily
be too much cautioned against
Sly-Adversaries, and *Swift-Apostasies*. OURS, I am
sure, are *Old* enough to be so ; In Age gone be-
yond those who were now immediately Written
to. And it is to be done, as with a mighty Thun-
der from a flaming Mountain !

I take the Writer of this Epistle, to be, not that
Jude the *Apostle*, who was in the Syriack Dialect
called *Thaddæus*, and from the Place to which he
belong'd, *Lebbeus* : but the *Jude*, who was one of
the *Four*, that are called, *The Brethren of our Lord* :
The *Sons of His Mother*, from whom He Suffered

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the Grievous Humiliation of being treated as an *Alien*, till probably His *Resurrection* from the Dead, brought them into the Number of *Believers* on Him. He now presumes not on such a Style, as that of, *A Brother*; but he takes one, than which the Highest Archangel in Heaven knows none more Glorious; *A Servant of JESUS CHRIST*. Behold him now doing a *Service*, very proper for, very worthy of, such an One. Behold him Warning and Arming the People of God, against the *Errors* which began *betimes* to infest the Churches of the Lord.

The *Antinomians* made a very Early Appearance, I see, among the Depravers and Subverters of the *Faith once delivered unto the Saints*. There are indeed very few *New Errors* broached in our *Later-Days*; the most of them, which now disturb the Churches of the Faithful, are only from I scarce know what *Enchantments*, raising the *Ghosts* of such as were Dead and Damn'd many Ages ago.

The Impious, and Mischievous Men, against whom the Inspired Writer is now Engaged, have their Impiety here declared. First, The *Ungodly Men* stand charged with *Filthiness*. They were that I may use the most agreeable Term, which the French Translation Leads me to, A very *Dissolute* Generation. I take notice by the way, that the Greek Term, here used for, *Lasciviousness*, or *Wantonness*, is derived from the Name of the Town *Selga*; a Place infamous for such *Dissolute Practices*. It makes me wish, that no Town of ours, may in our Days, have any *Vice* abounding in it, so as with a lasting Infamy to derive Name unto it. I am lothe here to Explain my self too particularly! I go on with my Remarks, and

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say ; That I would not be so unacquainted with *Church-History*, as to think, the *Gnosticks* to be the *Ungodly Men* peculiarly intended here ; tho' a well-known Interpreter, with an Oddity not unlike *many more* in him, with which he has most shamefully injured the Sacred Scriptures, ridiculously enough runs every where upon it. There were *Other* and *Older* Hereticks, which this Iniquity might be charged upon. And indeed, it is well known, and from Authority much better than *Epiphanius*, that the Hereticks of those Dayes were noted for Indulged *Impurities*. But then, secondly ; To our Astonishment, we find, what it was, that the Ungodly men, made the *Encouragement* of their *Filthiness*. Astonishing ! It was the *Grace of God*, which they turned into *Wantonness*. By the *Grace of God*, is meant, the Revelation which is in the Gospel brought unto us ; what we have, in [*Act. XX. 24.*] *The Gospel of the Grace of God* : A Revelation wherein, *Grace ! Grace !* the Glorious *Grace of God*, shines in its Meridian Glory, and with an amazing Splendor on the Children of Men. When it is said, They Turned it ; there is a Word used, that signifies, they *Wrested* it, they *Wronged* it, they *Transferred* it from the right use of it, they horribly Abused it. I am stop'd a little. *Whose Grace ?* We are told, *The Grace of OUR God*. Sirs, If we have any Sense of an Interest in GOD, and if we rejoyce in Him as OUR God, we shall have a *Zeal for Holiness* boiling in our Souls. If we care not whether *Holiness* flourish or no, we want a Good Mark, that the *Holy God* is OURS. *Ab, Lord, If thou be OUR God, we shall be lothe to see thy Gospel abused with any Unbely Practices.*

But

But you must now attend unto a DOCTRINE, that calls for a very Serious Attention with you.

To turn the Grace of God into Wantonness, Or, Wantonly to Abuse the Grace of God, is the Common Custome, and the Certain Symptom, of Ungodliness.

There is a great Number of Criminals, who are to Stand this day *Indited* before the Bar of the Glorious GOD. I shall have Time to do little more, than just call over their Names, and let them know, That they *have not the Fear of God before their Eyes.*

I am now to Enquire ;

Who are the Ungodly Ones, by whom the Grace of God is turned into Wantonness ?

In brief ; All they that are not by the *Favour* of God, brought the more to Love so Gracious a God, by whom they are so *favourably* dealt withal. In Sum ; All they that are the *Worse*, because they have so *Good* a God for to deal withal : These are they, to every One of whom it may be said, *Thou art the Man !*

More particularly,

I. *Ungodly Men* they are, who from the Decree of God, Encourage themselves in the Neglect of their *Duty* to GOD. We believe a, *Predestination to Life*, wherein God with *an Everlasting Purpose*, has decreed by His Counsel, to bring those whom He hath Chosen in Christ out of Mankind, unto Everlasting

Salvation.

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Salvation. We can Subscribe this Article; [The
Seventeenth of the *Church of Englands* famous
XXXIX,] because we find the Sacred Epistles
to the *Romans* and *Ephesians*, Expressly asserting it.
And when we have *Subscribed* it, we shall not then
Deny it, then *Decry* it, then *Oppose* it ; We should
Look on it, as a very Scandalous *Treachery* to do
so. This *Election* of *Some* to Everlasting Life, which
unavoidably implies a *Rejection* of *Others*, 'tis cal-
led, Rom. XI. 5. *The Election of Grace*. Oh !
Sovereign *Grace* ! Why has our God, *Chosen us*
in Christ before the *Foundation of the World*, and
Predestinated us unto the Adoption of Children ! The
Praise of the Glory of His Grace, is design'd in it ;
is display'd in it. Why are *Some* Taken, to be
Redeemed, Converted, Saved ; when *Others* are
not so ! 'Tis, because, *I will be gracious to whom*
I will be gracious, saith the Infinite GOD, who
gives none Account of His Matters. 'Tis all from
Unaccountable *Grace*. 'Tis, *Even so, Father, because*
it pleases thee. Now, See what *Ungodly Men* will
do ! They will be at *No Pains* to Turn unto
God ; *No Pains* to get the Chains of Death Knock'd
off their Souls ; *No Pains* to lay hold on Eternal
Life. Why so ? Why, — *Si Salvabor, Salvabor* ;
if it be Decreed that I shall be Saved, say they,
I shall be so, Let me do nothing at all about it, I
shall yet be Saved, if it be Decreed, I shall. And
so, they'l do nothing ! Thus they turn the *Grace*
of God into *Wantonness, and Idleness*. These Idle
Words, a Severe Account must be given of them
in the *Judgment of God*. But, *O thou Slothful and*
Wicked Servant, It is Untrue what thou sayest.
Thou shalt not be saved, if thou dost not Work
about thy own Salvation, We are directed, 2 Pet.
I. 10.]

I. 10. Give all Diligence, to make your Calling and Election sure. God has Decreed the End and the Means together. One Decreed for Life, will Strive to Enter the Strait Gate, and be in Agony lest he fall short of Entering into Life. The Man who will not give all Diligence to make his Calling Sure, and in that way his Election so, cannot Inherit Eternal Life. There is no Decree of God, that will carry Such an One into His Kingdom. Oh! Do not go on in a sleepy Impenitency, Lest you be found fore-ordained unto — What is to be trembled at? A Damnation that Slumbers not.

II. Who but Ungodly Men are they, who from the Contrivance of their Salvation, Encourage themselves, as if it gave them an Allowance for their Sinfulness. That we have Such a SAVIOUR as our IMMANUEL; Oh! the Riches of Grace discovered in it! Oh! the Unspeakable Gift! We may and must cry out, God SO Loved the World, and has been So gracious to us! The Motto to be written upon all that is done for us, in and by our Saviour, is in those Golden Letters; Eph. II. 5. BY GRACE YE ARE SAVED. But what is the Use that Some do make of this Grace? Because there is a Saviour, I will Venture to be a Sinner; This is the Language, how foaming, and how shameful! of Ungodliness! The New Covenant is a Covenant of Grace. There is a shout of, Grace! Grace! to be made upon every stroke! But you shall see how this Grace is plaid upon. In this Covenant, we Merit nothing by doing any thing. Then sayes the Sluggard, I will do nothing. Self is to be Annihilated in this Covenant; the Perpetual Projection of it is, CHRIST is All! CHRIST

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All! Then sayes the Sluggard, I have my self nothing to do. Tis not by our Own Works, that we attain to Righteousness; but in our Saviour we have our Justifying Righteousness. Then, sayes the Sluggish Sinner, Tis no Matter, tho' I be Careless about the works of Righteousness. We can do nothing to any Good Purpose, except our Saviour do Quicken us, do Assist us, do Strengthen us. Then, sayes the Door upon its Hinges, I will stand still; I will never try to stir; Tis to no purpose at all for me to do any thing. Our Faithful Saviour, who is Able to keep us from Falling has engaged for the Preservation of the Saints; that they shall be Kept by His Mighty Power; that None shall Pluck them out of His Hand. Then sayes one of them that would be at Ease in Zion, Let me fold my Hands to Sleep; what need I to keep a Strong Guard, and a Strict Watch upon my self? I stand, and why should I take heed lest I fall? Ungodly Men, You stand in the way of a dreadful Thunderbolt. It comes down upon you, from, Rom. VI. 1, 2. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in Sin, that Grace may abound? GOD FORBID. At this Rebuke, O Flye from your Slothfulness; At the Voice of this Thunder, O Hasten away from your Ungodliness. Let the Spirit of the New Covenant come upon you; and then Your Habitual, Your continual Inclination will be this; A Glorious CHRIST is He who does all for me. Ob! Let me then Love Him, and Seek Him, and Glorify Him unto the Uttermost; and be alwayes afraid of disobliging Him.

III. Can they be any other than Ungodly Men, who from the Readiness of the Divine Mercy or the Pardoning of Sin, Encourage themselves

to be the *Reader* in the *Committing* of *Sin*? *Lord, Thou art READY TO PARDON!* Who can hear such a Word, and the *Grace* of it not melt the Heart of Stone within him? The *Grace* of God, in *Pardoning* of *Sin*, 'tis Wonderful; 'Tis Wonderful! When we are *Justified*, it is, *Freely by His Grace*. It is the Name of our God, *Exod. XXXIV. 6, 7. The Lord, the Lord God, Merciful and Gracious, and abundant in Goodness, Forgiving Iniquity, and Transgression, and Sin.* For Monsters of Wickedness, to be made Monuments of *Pardoning Mercy*; For monstrous *Menassehs*, and *Mary Magdalenes*, to be received into the Favour of God, and be favoured by a Reconciled God as much as if they had never Sinned against Him! For *all manner of Sin and Blasphemy to be forgiven unto men*; and a *Fountain set open*, to which the most abominable Creatures in the World, are invited, there to *Wash and be Clean*: What but Infinite *Grace* can do such a thing! You shall now, but Oh! do it not without Horror! See what Improvement *Ungodly Men* will make of such *Grace*: An Improvement which one would wonder that any but a *Devil* should presume upon! They will Venture to *Sin*, in the Hope of a *Pardon*. Perhaps, they will be so senseless, and Sottish, and Exceeding Sinful, as to flatter themselves, that a, *God forgive me*, or a, *Lord, Have Mercy upon me*, will at any time obtain a *Pardon* for them. This Emboldens them to *Sin*, with a Prodigious Obstinacy; to be stout-hearted, and far from Righteousness: They stick at no Abominations. There is a God that will have Mercy, and will abundantly Pardon; So they will hold on Sinning, and *Sin abundantly*.

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And because there have been Some called, at the *Eleventh Hour*, and then found Mercy with God ; therefore they will Sin on, Sin with *Many Transgressions and Mighty Sins*, and put off till the *Last Hour*, the necessary Addresses to Heaven for Mercy. They *Persist* in Enmity and Rebellion against the Glorious God all their Days ; they *Presume*, 'tis only to *Ask* and *Have* a *Pardon* at the *Last*. Hideous *Ungodliness* ! We read, Psal. CXXXIV. 4. O Lord, *There is Forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared*. But now, to say ; *There is Forgiveness with God, therefore I will cast off His Fear, and Go on without His Fear* ; O Vile Perversion ! To Sin from the *View* of a *Pardon*, one would think, it should be very near, *very near* ! Sinning beyond the *Reach* of a *Pardon*.

IV. Will not all Heaven Pronounce those *Ungodly Men*, who because they take themselves delivered from the *Condemning Power* of the *Law*, Encourage themselves to shake off the *Commanding Power* of the *Law* ? The *Grace of God*, has Delivered us from the *Curse* of the *Law*. It is a sweet Advice which brought unto us ; Gal. III. 13. *CHRIST has Redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us*. The *Punishment*, which by the *Law* of God be- longed unto us for our *Sin*, has been inflicted upon our *Saviour*. Our Blessed *Surety* has Paid our *Debt*, by Suffering for us, the *Curse* which belonged unto us. The *Law* of God has now no De- mand upon the Believer, that the Divine *Justice* may be Satisfyed : Our *Surety* has given Satis- faction. O *Grace* of incomparable *Sweetness* ! How sweet, how Sweet, the *Words* of it unto the *Taste* ; Soft *Piety* ! But now, the *Poison*, which *Ungodly Men* will Suck out of this *Grace* ! They suppose

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themselves rescued from the *Curse* of the *Law*. They make it an Advantage for their Escape also from the *Rule* of the *Law*. *Silly Ones* ; An Escape, that is to say, into *Chains of Darkness* ; into the most rueful Captivity in the World. This *Law*, Man ; 'tis the *Law of Liberty* ! 'Tis an *Enlarged Soul*, that is effectually in the *Bonds and Wayes* of this *Law* ! But the *Slaves* of *Sin* ; They will indulge themselves in gross Violations of the *Law* ; but still their Inward *Peace* not Violated. No Breaches of the *Law*, will break the *Peace* into which they have dozed their Minds. They will flatter themselves into a *Great Peace*, tho' they do not *Love the Law*. Why, say the *Hardened Wretches* ; *We are not under the Law*. *We must not fetch our Peace from the Law* ; *Christ has answered the Law for us*. What an Affront is this, unto the *Grace of God* ? We read ; *Rom. VI. 14, 15. Sin shall not have Dominion over you for you are not under the Law, but under Grace*. What then ? Shall we *Sin*, because we are not under the *Law*, but under *Grace* ? *God forbid*. *Sirs* You are not yet under *Grace*, but under the *Law* if you can be content, that *Sin* should still have *Dominion* over you. If you *Sin*, because you are not under the *Law*, it is very sure, you are still under it, in the worse sense of being so. The *Law* does *Condemn* you, if you won't let it *Command* you. If you shake off that *Everlasting Rule* of *Living to God*, which His *Law* Prescribes, *Unbely and Unthankful* ones, you shall still hear the *Thunder* of its *Wrath* *Cursing* of you.

V. Is it possible for any but *Ungodly Men* from *Gods Delays* in *Striking* of them, to bear
courage

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courage themselves to *Delay*, their *seeking* to Him, their *Serving* of Him. The *Grace* of God is very Bright, in His *Patience* towards the Provoking Children of Wickedness. The Psalmist observes, [VII. 11.] *God is a Righteous Judge, and is Provoked every Day*; and has *bent His Bow, and made it Ready*. Yet such is His *Grace*, that He does not presently let fly His *Arrows*; Deserved *Arrows*, and Oh! how Destroying Ones! how torturous and worse than Lightning, to the *Spirits*, which they Light upon! A Patient God spares wicked men: He does not Strike them Dead; tho' they daily challenge Thunderbolts. O Peerless *Grace*! Of a Provoked, a Righteous, an Almighty God; yet, *Waiting to be Gracious*. But now, the use that *Ungodly* and *Ungrateful* men make of this *Grace*. What can be more Malicious, what more Venemous, than that which you read! Eccl. VIII. 11. *Because Sentence against an Evil Work, is not Executed Speedily*; therefore the heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do *Evil*. Horrible Stupidity! Because the Threatened Judgments of God, have not yet come upon them, for their Crimes, they fancy, they'll never come; the *threatned folks*, have still a long while to Live. Because they don't yet feel the *Evil*, that is *Pursuing of Sinners*, they comfort themselves, that such *Evil* will never overtake them. They Live; Yea, they Thrive. God Wounds them not; For that very cause they grow Secure, they grow Hardy, they go on still in their *Trespases*. God has not yet Cut them down for the Ill Fruits they bear; He Lengthens out their Time. They bear the more Ill Fruits for that; and the wicked men wax worse and worse. God gives them a Space

to Repent ; They do, for that very cause Delay to Repent, and make it a Space to act more *Wickedness*, and with more of *Creediness*. But, O Ye *Brutish* among the People ; What are you doing ? Shake before that awful Thunderclap : Rom. II. 4, 5. *Despise*st thou the Riches of His Goodness, and Forbearance, and Long Suffering ; not knowing that the Goodness of God Leads thee to Repentance ? But after thy Hardness and Impenitent Heart, treasurest up unto thy self Wrath against the Day of Wrath ? Impenitents ; Know you not, That *Abused Patience* will at Length be turned into *Terrible Fury* ? and that, according to Speech usual in the Church of God, The *Justice* which has *Leaden Feet*, will at length find *Iron Hands*, to do its Executions ? Oh ! Turn to God in this *Day of His Patience* ! Oh ! Let the *Long suffering of God*, but make you Stay no longer from accepting His offered *Salvation*. Because God seems to *Keep Silence*, Do you think, He is even *Such an One* as your selves, and approves your Doings ? You will find it otherwise, when He shall come to *Set your Sins in order* before you ; to *tear you in Pieces*, and there shall be none to deliver you.

VI. 'Tis a thing of an *Ungodly Aspect*, for Men, from such *Liberties* as are *Lawful Ones*, to Encourage themselves in taking such as are *Unlawful Ones*. There are *Great Liberties*, which the *Grace of God* has granted unto *Christians* ; Especially now the *Mosaic Yoke* is taken off, by the *Grace of a more Evangelical Dispensation*. But what sayes the *Law of CHRIST* ? 1 Cor. VIII. 9. *But take heed, Lest by any means this Liberty of yours become a Stumbling Block, to them that are weak*

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lay to Mind this ; When things are so *Indifferent*, that
Wick- there is no *Necessity* of them, and no *Command-*
O Ye ment of God obliges to do them, we should
 ing ? think ; *Tis true, I may do this thing ; But wont my do-*
 m. II. ing of it, cause other People to Sin against my Saviour ?
 , and In this Case we must forbear ; Else we make a
 g that wrong use of our *Liberty*. *Luther* had an Holy
 But saying ; *Omnia Libera per Fidem, serva per Chari-*
asurest *tatem*. O Redeemed People of God ; This is a
Pratb ? Case that calls for a more Frequent, and Solemn
d Pa- Consideration, than it commonly finds among
 Fury ? you ! Thus, the *Grace* of God is also Trampled
 church on, When we run into an *Excess* in the use of
 , will *Lawful Things*. The Christian has from the *Grace*
 ions ? of God, A CHARTER, for the whole *Creation*.
 ience ! I will show you my *Charter*. It runs in those *Terms*,
 e you Tim. IV. 4. *Every Creature of God is Good, and*
 d Sal- nothing to be refused, if it be received with *Thanks-*
 , Do giving. Well, But the *Precepts* of GOD, and the
 selves, *Maxims* of a Godly and Sober and Righteous Life,
 ind it must set Bounds to us, in our using of our *Charter*.
 r Sins A Man may Eat any thing : But yet he may
 , and not be a *Glutton*. A Man may Drink what he
 will ; But for all that, he must not be *Drunk*.
 To be *Slave* unto the use of an *Indian Weed*, or
 r Men, any other *Trifle*, is beneath a Christian, who has
 o En- Right Thoughts of *Liberty*. He may use it ; but
 re Un- not so, as to be in Pain, if he be not alwayes
 which at it. Any Civil *Modes* of *Apparel* may be fol-
 ; E- lowed : but *Vanity* and *Luxury* in Apparel ; Ha-
 by the bits that are the *Ensigns* of a Foolish Mind ; Im-
 - But moderate and Exorbitant *Gaieties* ; The Disciples
 III. 9. of the Humble JESUS, must put off such things.
 of yours *Liberty* is turned into *Slavery*, when it runs into
 weak *Extravagances*. I never Sin, but I *Enslave* my self.
 Mind

VII. 'Tis

VII. 'Tis a Branch of *Ungodliness*, for Men, from the *Relation* they bear to the God of Heaven, to Encourage themselves in Miscarriages towards the *Men* on Earth, whom they stand Related to. The *Grace of God* bestows mighty *Priviledges*, on them, whom He raises unto the Relation of His *People*, and His *Children*. But what says the Apostle? 1 Pet. II. 16. *As free, not using your Liberty, as a Cloke of Maliciousness, but as the Servants of God.* Thro' the *Grace of God*, my Conscience is exempted from all *Humane Empire*; None but the Great GOD can Command my *Conscience*; I may not Complement any Man, tho' he were a greater Tyrant than him at *Versailles*, with a Subjection of my *Conscience* unto him. For all that, I must *make Conscience* of Submitting to the Government, which is an *Ordinance of God*. Paul writing to the *Romans*, cautions them of this; That they should not on the score of their *Christianity* pretend an Exemption from the Jurisdiction of the *Magistrate*, in the Things for which *God has Ordained him*. So Nothing but the *WORD of God*, is to Order all things in the *Church of God*; Things are never done *Decently* there, but when done according to that Order. The *Inventions* of Men may not be imposed there; We are to Reject such *Schismatical Impositions*; The *Imposers*, however Liberal they are in bestowing the Term upon others, are to be look'd upon as the true *Schismaticks*. For all this; the Church is to *Pray for all that are in Authority*; and its People are to *Lead Peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty*. In the Church, the *Pastors* must not Lord it over the *Heritage*.

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Heritage. The *People* must have the *Choice* of their own *Pastors* : The *Pastors* must proceed with the *Consent* of the *People* in things of common concernment. This was the true State of Things in the *Primitive Church*, and so they continued for some hundreds of years, and until they were overwhelmed with the *Usurpations* of Antichrist. It is an *Obstinacy* little short of a *Miraculous* Infliction, which they discover, who will at this time of Day, *Contradict* things that are so notoriously demonstrated. Sacred and Precious *Liberties* ! But now, you read ; Gal. V. 13. *Brethren, Ye have been called unto Liberty ; Only use not your Liberty for an occasion to the Flesh, but by Love Serve one another.* O dear Flocks of the Lord ; You must not now forget that word ; *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and Watch for your Souls* : Nor forget that word ; *Let the Elders that Rule well be counted worthy of double Honour* : Nor forget that word ; *Know them that are over you in the Lord, and Esteem them very highly in Love.* The Grace of God should indeed cause *Pastors* and *People*, to be always loading One another with Tokens of Mutual Affection. In our Families, *Humanity* goes a great way, and *Christianity* much further, in this ; That a *Servant* becomes a *Brother*. But if the *Servant* shall now Despise his Master, Insult his Master, *Disobey* the Master, which the *Fifth Commandment* has bound him to ; Let that *Brother* be beaten into better Matters ; make him to know his *Inferiour Condition* a little better. He Saucily Playes upon the Grace of God ; and should be chastised for it.

VIII. 'Tis a flaming *Ungodlineſſ*, when from the *Gifts* of God unto Men, their *Sins* againſt God, are encouraged, are furniſhed, are nourished. The *Grace* of God, grants *Gifts* unto Men; Oh, why ſhould it be ſaid, *Unto the Rebellious*! *Ungodly Men*, they make the *Gifts* of God unto them, only a *Furniture* and a *Nouriſhment* for them, in carrying on *Rebellions* againſt Him. *Unrighteous Ones*; They fall into the Fault of *Jefſurun*; Deut. XXXII. 15. *He waxed fat, and Kicked*. Have they any *Wit*? *Fools* have the keeping of it; They are only, *Wiſe to do Evil*. Have they *Health* and *Strength* of Body? It only renders them the more *Able*, and the more *Eager* to *Commit Iniquity*. Are they *Beautiful*? They are *Proud* of it: And with it, they *Tempt the Simple ones*, and *theſe that are void of Underſtanding*. Do *Riches* increaſe upon them? All goes to feed, the *Luſt of the Fleſh*, and the *Luſt of the Eye*, and the *Pride of Life*. They do but the more put their *Truſt in Uncertain Riches*. God has little *Honour* from *their Subſtance*. Are they put into *Commiſſions* or advanced unto *Stations* and *Places* of ſome *Dignity*? It fills them with empty *Conceits* of *themſelves*. They employ their *Opportunities*, not ſo much to *Do Good* in the World, as that they may be *made Rich*, and the *Glory of their Houſe* increaſed. The XLVII. Chapter of *Genefis*, to me Exhibits an Example of ſuch an *Abuſed Advancement*, which I muſt own, I cannot without *Scandal*, and *Sorrow*, and *Wonder* think upon. But how much imitated in our *Later Ages*? *Marvellous Diſingenuity*! To fight againſt

against the Blessed God, with *His Own Weapons*,
at such a rate! Thus to take *His Corn*, and
His Wine, and *His Wool*; and only *Serve diverse*
Lusts with them! Thus to take *His Talents*,
and only *Trade* for the *Devil* with them!
With such *Ungodly Men*, how Suitably, how
Pungently may we use that Expostulation!
Deut. XXXII. 6 *Do ye thus Requite the Lord, O*
Stupid People and Unwise! A Base Requital for
the *Grace* of a Good God! Oa! Blush, and
be Ashamed of it.

IX. I have one word more to speak; and I
may the more freely speak it, inasmuch as the
Cause of *Godliness* is Evidently Concerned in it.
It is this, 'Tis an Evident Affront unto the
Grace of God, for Men to make the *Birth* of
our *Holy Saviour*, an Encouragement and an Oc-
casion for very *Unboly Enormities*. The *Grace* of
God never Shone out more Gloriously, than in that
Occurrence upon which an *Angel* flew from
Heaven to tell us, *Behold I bring you good Ti-*
nings of Great Joy; That unto you there is born
this Day a Saviour. But if such an *Angel* were *this*
Day to Preach among you, do you think, He
could not Thunder and Lighten Wonderfully
against the Vicious practices, in which this *Grace*
of God, and that *Holy Saviour*, is this Day Af-
fronted by multitudes of *Ungodly Men* in the World!
do not now propose any matter of *Doubtful*
disputation; but One, wherein I shall have *all*
Ungodly Persons of whatever different *Perswasions*
other things, Concurring with me, I do not
now dispute whether they who three or four
hundred Years after the Birth of our *Saviour*.

first began the Festival of his Nativity (I say, first began, for *Vossius* himself confesses it was not kept in the first and second Century, and *Clementinus* truly sayes, *Apud Vetustissimos nunquam Legitur!*) did not mistake the Time of it. For they who say, *Thou hast given thy Son to be born this Day*, know not what they say; The Day is concealed; yea, it is now beyond Contestation proved, that not only the Month but also the very Year of it, has been Egregiously mistaken. *

* The Late most accurate Professor of the Mathematicks, in Cambridge. has in his *Exquisite work* about the Chronology of the Bible, brought this Matter under such a Demonstration, that it is no longer to be disputed of. The whole Process of the Demonstration, is too large to be introduced here. But briefly; we are certain, that our Saviour was born before the Death of Herod, that horrible Tyrant, whom they call, The Great. We have now discovered Irrefragable Proofs, that this Monster Expired, on the Twenty-fifth of November, in the 4710 year of the Julian Period, which was Three years and above a Month, before the present Christian Era. Besides many other unquestionable Accounts, concerning the Date of Herods Reign, we have a most infallible one, in the Eclipse of the Moon, which happened, as all agree on the Thirteenth of March before his Death. By this infallible Mark, he died in the 4710 year of the Julian Period which was the 4001 year of the World. And the Jewish Kalender has all along made the 25 day of November, an Holy day; Because on that Day Herod the King died: Not the Birth of our Saviour must be, at least a Month before the Death of Herod. And on the other side, we cannot allow very much more than a Month; because of the Time, which now Easily determined, for the Attendance of the Father John Baptist at the Temple. The Opinion of Dr. Lightfoot and Some others, who would place the Birth of our Saviour Two years before the Death of Herod, can by no means be no

supported

supported. It must unavoidably be the Same Year; But then, it could not possibly be after October. Nor, do I know, why it should not be, as many Learned men have judged, about the Time of the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a glorious and elegant Figure of it. The Conjecture, That October being really the Tenth Month, to them who begin the Year in January, the Primitive Christians had a Tradition of our Saviours being born on the 25 day of the Tenth Month; and this threw the first Institutors of the present Holiday, into the Error which has ever since been gone upon; I Know no need of Paying any Respect unto it. Upon the whole; It is now determined, that the Christian Era, the Computation whereof was first made by Dionysius Exiguus, between five and six hundred years after the Birth of our Saviour, has misreckoned above three years; insomuch that we are now truly entred into the Year of our Lord, 1716. And it is also determined, that the Birth of our Saviour was before the Month of November, in which the Bloody Idumæan, who sought His Death, found his own.

I do not now dispute, whether People do well to Observe such an *Uninstituted Festival* at all, or no. Good Men may love one another, and may treat one another with a most Candid Charity, while he that *Regardeth a Day, Regardeth it unto the Lord*, and he that *Regardeth not the Day*, also shows his *Regard unto the Lord*, in his not *Regarding* of it. Tho' this I will take leave to say; If the Churches of NEW ENGLAND preserve the *Religion of the LORDS DAY*, it will in the *Day of Reformation* that must come on, be judg'd no Dishonour to them, that they have harmonized with their *United Brethren* in Scotland, in a Point for which the last of their peculiar Kings once applauded their *Purity*; even their not having a *Yule* observed among them. What I am going

going to animadvert upon, is a thing, which there can be *no doubt* about. And there are some things that render it highly Seasonable, to dispense those *Admonitions of God our Saviour*, unto our Children, which I am now to pour down upon them. The famous *Perkins* long since complained; *That the Feast of Christs Nativity is spent in Revelling, Dicing, Carding, Masking, and in all Licentious Liberty, for the most part, as tho' it were some Heathen Feast, of Ceres, or Bacchus.* Yea, the zealous Martyr *Latimer* complained, *That Men dishonour Christ more in the Twelve Days of Christmas, than in all the twelve Months of the Year besides.* All the truly Religious People in the World, still make the Complaint with Lamentation. We also must Mourn in our Complaint, and make a Noise, upon it. My Concern is now, with our own Children; and for such as we must faithfully Admonish in our Ministry, as we shall answer the same unto GOD. Children, We lay the Charges of God upon you; That if any People take *this Time*, for any thing of a *Riotous Tendency*, you do not associate with them, in such *Ungodliness*. No, but let your Answer to those Children of Folly be, *The Grace of God in Sending us a Great Saviour calls for more Pious Acknowledgments.* Let your Own Conscience be appeal'd unto; the Preacher which every one of you has in his own bosome, hearken'd to! Can you in your Conscience think, that our Holy Saviour is honoured, by *Mad Mirth*, by long *Eating*, by hard *Drinking*, by lewd *Gaming*, by rude *Revelling*; by a *Mass* fit for none but a *Saturn*, or a *Bacchus*, or the Night of a *Mahometan Ramadam*? You

cannot

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cannot possibly think so! At the *Birth* of our Saviour, we read, *A Multitude of the Heavenly Host was heard Praising of God.* But shall it be said, That at the *Birth* of our Saviour for which we owe as High Praises to God as they can do, We take the Time to Please the *Hellish Legions*, and to do Actions that have much more of *Hell* than of *Heaven* in them? I must faithfully tell you, This way of honouring the Blessed JESUS, who came to *Redeem us from a Vain Conversation, received by Tradition from our Fathers,* 'tis a practical *Blasphemy* upon Him; an *High-handed Blasphemy* upon Him! It is to outrage the Holy Son of God! It is to Expose yourselves unto that Indignation of Heaven, which they who *take the Name of the Lord our God in Vain*, ly open unto. If you will yet go on, and will do Such Things, I forewarn you, That the Burning Wrath of God, will break forth among you. All Persons, of any the least *Godliness*, will approve my Faithfulness, in what I have now Spoken; If any Man Dislike it, and Revile it, he only shows the Brand of an *Ungodly Man*, and a *Contempt* from every Citizen of *Zion*, accordingly belongs unto him.

Upon the Whole: The EXHORTATION that now calls upon us all, must be that; 2 Cor. VI. 1. *We beseech you, that ye receive not the Grace of God in Vain.* Oh! Don't Wantonize upon the Grace of God. But upon every Instance of Grace, make that Reflection, *What shall I render to the Lord?* In short, Remember this; *Obligations to Holiness*, You are still to Read *Them*, in all that is ever done by the

the *Grace of God* for a Sinful World. If GOD be *Gracious*, My Friend, thy Inference from it must alwayes be thus ; *Then I must be Holy ; O my God, make me so !* To Sin the more, because of the *Grace* in our God ; Verily, 'Tis the foulest *Prophanity* ; An attempt it is, to call in the God who is of *Purer Eyes than to behold Evil*, and can not *Look on Iniquity*, and render Him a *Patron* of all *Evil*, all *Iniquity*. 'Tis the grossest *Ingratitude* ; *Evil rendred for Good*, in the most odious manner that ever was heard of : *Evil will never depart from the Doer of it*. And, *What will ye do in the End thereof ?* Endless, *Endless* Misery will be the *End* thereof ! I must say unto you, It is the blackest *Note of a Reprobate Mind* ; a Soul *Forfaken of God !* And it will pull down a *Wrath* unto the *Uttermost*. Sinner, If *Grace* it self become thy *Foe*, what *Friend* canst thou have in *Heaven* or *Earth* ? To *Wantonnize* upon it, is the way to make it so.

That *Saving* drawes on a *COROLLARY*, which my *Discourse* may do well to *Lodge* in the *Conclusion* of it. If it be an *Ungodly* thing, and a *Dangerous*, to turn the *Grace of God* into *Wantonness*, You must *Look on it*, as the Same thing, to turn the *Wrath of God* into *Ridicule*. The *Truth* is, These Two Things go together. They who do the One, do the Other too. O you that are yet in your *Sins* ; *Unbelievers*, that have not made your *Flight* by *Faith* unto the *Only Saviour* ; You, you are they. of whom it is said ; *Joh. III 36 The Wrath of God abideth on them*. Certainly, You *Ridicule* that *Wrath*, or you could not continue in your *Sins* ; You could not but be in *Agony*, for a *Deliverance from the Wrath*

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Wrath to come. You make light of that Wrath, which throws down *Rocks*, and whereby *Mountains* are overturned: An *Anger*, which, O Lord, *who knows the Power of!* Miserable Ones, yet walking in the *Sinful Wayes* for which your own Hearts condemn you; Wayes that have *Destruction* and *Misery* in them; Oh! Break off your *Sins*, and Accept and Embrace the *JESUS* who would Save you from your *Sins*. Otherwise, you will anon feel the *Wrath* of God, but find the Force of it Irresistible, the weight of it Insupportable, the Tortures of it in your *Wounded Spirit*, Intolerable. You will roar out the Words, which a late famous Protestant Apostatizing to the Popish Idolatry, did in unspeakable Horror of Conscience, Dy withal; those words, Heb. X. 31. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the Living God.*

¶ It ought rather to be an *Ingredient* of this Discourse, than an *Appendix* to it, for me to treat you with yet another *COROLLARY*.

You have all this while seen the *Word of God* brandished against those *Armies of the Aliens*, who turn the *Grace of God* into *Wantonness*. We hope, We are better skill'd at *making Inferences*, than those Men, whose *Transgression* says, *There is no fear of God before their Eyes*. I am sure, this is Right One. For men from the *Word of God* whom self to Encourage themselves in things very contrary to that *Holy Word*; this is a very Wrong Thing. Yea, Let it come into the Catalogue; and make up the *Decad* of the *Wayes*, wherein

D

Men

Men turn the Grace of God into Wantonness
 That we Enjoy the Word of God, wherein the
 Day spring from on high has Visited us, 'tis thro'
 the tender Mercy of our God. And it is, The Good
 Word of His Grace, which this Tender Mercy of our
 God has bestow'd upon us. Now, to fetch from
 this very Word of God, which is all of it Written
 that we may not Sin, the Plea's to Excuse, to
 Defend, to Embolden Sin; truly this is to Sin
 Impudently, and with peculiar Aggravations. 'Tis
 to do what we read, 2 Pet. III. 16 They wrest
 the Scriptures unto their own Destruction. What
 else do they do, who because we read, Take
 no Thought for to Morrow, give themselves up
 to Slothfulness in their Business? What else do
 they, who because we read, If any man provide
 not for his own, he is worse than an Infidel, there-
 fore will out of that Provision, spare little or
 nothing for the Pious Uses directed of God.
 What else do they, who because we read, He
 that Eateth and Drinketh at the Table of the Lord
 Unworthily, Eateth and Drinketh Judgment unto
 himself, therefore Stay away Unworthily, and never
 Prepare to come thither, as they ought to do.
 But this Ungodliness is never more Exemplified
 then in the Ungodly Inferences, drawn from the
 Scriptural Examples, of them who have Sinned
 grievously, while they have had the Grace of
 God asleep in their Souls, or have after Great
 and Long Sinning been thro' the Grace of God
 received unto Mercy. Noah Sinned, Lot Sinned
 Abominable things were done by David, Peter
 did an horrible Thing. And, Why may not
 venture to do so too? This was an Ungodliness

Grace Defended.

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of old run into ; *Si* Noah, *cur non et Ego* ?
Si David, *cur non et Ego* ? Alas, Children,
 These *Examples* are for our *Admonition*. Why
 do you misapply them for your *Depravation* ?
 They are to make you *Afraid* of provoking the
 Holy One, to leave you unto your selves ;
 Lest you *Sin like them*, and then Endure such
Broken Bones, as made them to *Roar by reason of*
the Disquietness of their Heart, under the Impres-
 sions of His dreadful Displeasure, when they
 did the *things which displeased the Lord*. While
 you hearten your selves to *Sin*, because these
 Men have *Sinned*, you wretchedly divert the Re-
 ation from the true Purposes, for which the
 ens of God have Written it ; and you Forget
 the *Sad Hours*, which the Sins of these Persons
 brought them to !

But of all the *Examples* in the Bible, there
 ever was any wherein the *Grace of God* has
 een so abused, as that of the *Thief on the Cross*.
 The *Cross* of that Penitent *Thief*, has been a
 umbling-block to Millions of Ungodly Men-
 le it seems, put off his *Repentance* to the *Last*
hour, and then, he found Mercy with God.
 Therefore, sayes the Impenitent Sinner, *I will do*
too. I apprehend, it will be a Service to
 the Interests of *Godliness*, that this case be a
 ttle spoken to : and I will therefore, in a brief
dissertation, Conclude with it.

D 2

A Few

A Few Thoughts on that

QUESTION;

Whether the Penitent Thief on the Cross, be not an Example of One Repenting at the Last Hour, and on such a Late Repentance received unto Mercy?

I Am far from a *Peremptory Denial* of it. I cannot prove, that we have not such an Example here given unto us. Who can tell what *Sovereign Grace* may do? We cannot *Limit the Holy One* from doing such a Thing. 'Tis a *Possible Thing*; And the Glorious Lord may leave us in the Story a Room for such a Possibility, that the Sinful Children of Men overtaken by their *Last Hour* in their Sins, may not be abandoned unto a *total Despair* of Mercy. And that their Surviving Friends may not sorrow as those that have no Hope, on their occasion. But at the same time, there are many things which render it *Probable*, that the Penitent now before us, will prove no such Example, and that the Impious *Procrastination* of Repentance, which is too commonly encouraged from this Example, will be found utterly spoiled of all its pretended Encouragement. It has been a Matter of ju

Resentment unto the Friends of Piety, that the *Thief on the Cross*, going a Villian thither, and at the *Last Hour* finding *Repentance* and *Forgiveness* there, has been the *Goliath's Sword*, and a sort of *Enchanted Spear*, by which the cause of *Persisting Impenitency*, has been maintained in the World. I am willing to Disarm the Enemy of his boasted Weapon.

Unto me, it seems not at all *Improbable*, nay, there appears an high *Probability* for it; That the Malefactor now Repenting on the Cross, brought thither the *Saving Dispositions of Repentance* with him, and had before now begun upon him a Work of that *Repentance*, which is unto *Salvation*. For,

First, there is nothing in the Sacred History, to brand this Poor Man with the Character of an *Unrepenting Sinner*, at the Time of his being brought forth to his Execution. Two of the Evangelists, *Matthew*, and his Follower and Abridger *Mark*, indeed Speak in the Plural Number, as if *both* of the *Thieves* at first joined in the Reproaches of our Saviour. And if it were so, it may remain a *Quere*, How far a *true Penitent* heartily bewailing of all his Wickedness, and believing in the Sacrifice of the Promised *Messiah* for the Pardon of it, might yet be so circumstanced, as to be kept *Invincibly Ignorant*, that our Blessed *JESUS*, was this *Messiah*? But then I concur with those more Judicious Writers, who do by no means allow, that the Thief whom we now have our Eye upon, did *himself* Reproach our *Saviour*. *Drusius* is displeased at them who make pretend this objection of the *Plural Number*, and sayes, *Apagite, qui non didicistis Literas Hebraicas.* They

They are ignorant of the *Hebrew Style*. [See Judg. XII. 7.] It is also observed as a peculiar, but perpetual way, taken by the Evangelist *Matthew*, in his Writing, That where *Several* Persons are joined, and *One* Speaks, and it is either in the Name of the rest, or the rest are Silent at it, he refers the Speeches or Actions of that *One*, unto the *whole Number* present. [A Notable Example, see Matth. XX. 30 with Mar. X. 46. And another, Matth. XXVI. 8. with Joh. XII. 4.] Thus, we read of Things *Written in the Prophets*, when only *One* of the Prophets wrote them. *Glassius* will further satisfy you. 'Tis a frequent *Synecdoche*. This is indeed an *Ancient Observation* : and it leaves us cause to Suspect, as very Learned Expositors have conjectured, That the *other Thief alone* Reproached our Saviour, as *Luke* relates it, and this was wholly Silent at the First, until the Violence of his Companions Language, and the consideration of the astonishing Accidents than in his View, compelled him at once to rebuke his Companion, and Confess his Redeemer. I am far from thinking the *Apostolical Constitutions*, to be of that Antiquity and Authority which a famous Arian in our Dayes would assign unto them. Yet some things in them, are of such *Antiquity*, as to deserve that Reverence and Reception with us, which is due to the Opinion of the *Ancients*. And it is a little Confirmation of my Opinion in this case, that the *Apostolical Constitutions* do favour it. *Ferom* also and *Austin* are of the same Opinion. A *Syllepsis* here, sayes *Ferom* ; An *Enallage*, saith *Austin*.

But then,

Secondly ;

Secondly ; Without having Recourse to the Judgment of the Great *Vocatus*, That this Transgressor had the Beginning of a *Regenerate State*, before he was left unto his Capital Transgressions ; It is an Easy thing to Suppose, and there is little Reason to question the Supposal ; That this Thief had *Opportunity*, in the *Prison*, for some while before his Execution, to come unto a Serious *Repentance* of his Ungodly Life. His Miserable Condition, would naturally lead him to *Consider of his Wayes*. There were also Some *Godly Men* in the Town, whose Charity might lead them to Visit him with their Instructions. We still have some Footsteps of the Care, which the Godly among the Jews took of, *The Condemned*. They would not *Scourge*, much less, would they *Hang* a Criminal, without instructing him from the *Sacred Scriptures*. He might also be long before *Instructed* in those Truths of Religion, which the Spirit of God might here bring home unto his Mind, with a Sanctifying Efficacy. 'Tis very possible, and more than so, that this Man, might while in the *Gaol*, and many Weeks before his *Death*, be brought, bitterly to *Lament*, and sincerely to *Abhor*, all his wicked Courses, and heartily to *Prefer* a Life devoted unto the Service of God, and rely on the Offering of the *Son of God* then Expected, for his Reconciliation to the Glorious Oae, in *whose Favour is Life* ; and be truly desirous to Know and to Do the whole *Duty* of a Repenting Sinner. Yea, there is nothing to hinder, but that he might have heard so much concerning the *Fame* of the *Wisdom* of God in our Blessed JESUS, *with his* *Words*, that the *Destruction* and the *Death* to which he

he was near, might find him exceedingly disposed for the Faith of this our JESUS too.

And,

Thirdly, that which very much Countenances the Conjecture, that it might be so, is ; The *Wonderful Readiness* of the Thief, at all the Expressions of this Repentance, *as soon* as you see him exposed on the Cross. Every thing looks as if he came thither *Prepared* with the *Grace*, which he so readily, and so notably Expresses there. We have not the least Intimation of any *Pains* taken there to *Enlighten* him, and *Admonish* him ; Nor do the *Torments* then upon him, and the *Clamours* of the People about him, seem to allow the *Words of the Wise*, then to do much, at reaching of him. And yet the *Grace* Exercised by this Penitent, was of so Various and Marvellous an Application, that one may say, He does in a *few Hours* the work of *some Years* ; and in a *few Minutes* runs thro' the whole *Race* of Christianity ! It looks as if he brought hither with him, a *Broken and a Contrite Heart* ; and the Humble Sense of his having deserved not only *Death* from the hand of Man, but much more *Hell* from the hand of God, whereof he made now such a Ready Acknowledgment. *We Suffer justly ; we receive the due Reward of our Deeds !* The words are dictated from an Heart, that seems to have been some time deeply affected, with the sense of what is uttered in them. And, as *Grotius* notes, *Magnum est Penitentia Signum, in Pena sua acquiescere*. It looks also as if he brought hither with him, a pretty clear and strong Perswasion, of Things concerning the *Messiah*, which it is plain from the Gospel of *John*,
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the Church in those dayes did more thoroughly believe, than some too disaffected unto *true Christianity* in our Dayes, are willing to allow of. He is perswaded, of a *Future State*; That in the World to come, the Children of Men shall be *Raised from the Dead*: That the *Messiah* shall have a *Kingdom* in that World: That there must be *Two Comings* of the *Messiah*: And that the *Messiah* will do those things for His People, when He *Comes in His Kingdom*, which can be done by none, but One who is *God* as well as *Man*. All these, and more than these *Illustrious Articles*, are professed in the *Faith* of this Penitent. But what *Opportunity* could he have to be *Taught* these Things, after he was Nailed unto the Tree? The Spirit of God, it is true, now Excited the *Exercise* of his *Faith*, on these Articles, after a Wonderful Manner. But shall we say, that the *Idea's* and *Impressions* of the Things in these Articles were now, and never till now, purely by an *Internal Irradiation*, produced in his Mind? This would indeed *Multiply the Miracles* in this matter; but surely, *Citra Necessitatem*! And it may be also said, *Contra Utilitatem*. There is no *Need* of such an Imagination; and some have thought, the *Good* of it, has been as little.

Yet more;

It was not only a *True Faith*, which the Penitent here Exercises; but he looks like one grown *Strong in Faith*, in giving such *Glory to God*. My *Calvin* sayes truly upon it. *Certe vix a Mundo condito magis rarum et memorabile Fidei Exemplum unquam Existit*. Perceiving our *JESUS* to be that *Son of God*, on whom he had Believed, he now makes a most *Marvellous Confession* of His *Glory*.

He ascribes to *Him* the *Glory*, which belongs unto the Promised *Messiah*, and that *Seed* that was to *bruise the Head of the Angel of Death*. And, as it was of old remarked, *A Latrone videti sunt Apostoli, qui tunc credidit, quando illi defecerunt*; He was the only *Apostle* our Saviour now had cleaving unto him; I had almost said *The only Visible Believer*, in the World, at least the *only Thorough paced One*. He supplied the Room of *Judas*, (who was a *Thief*;) He Preached Him on the *Cross*, whom *Judas* betray'd to the *Cross*. Yea, he was, as one calls him, *The Apostle of the Apostles*. He declared his *Faith*, when it could afford no *Temporal Advantage* at all unto him; He did it, when it would rather augment the *Shame* and *Scorn*, which was now heaping upon him; He did it, when as *Austin* says, *His Confessing of a Crucified Christ, was in a Manner, (quantum si fuisset pro Domino Crucifixus,) as much as if he had been himself Crucified for Him, whom he Confessed.*

Finally; The *Labour* he uses to convince his Companion of his *Impiety*, and Reclame him from it, and Quicken the *Fear of God* in him; it looks as if he came thither armed with a Zealous and Intense Desire to Propagate a Sense of God in the Hearts of others. A Repentance has usually made a little Progress, before it Comes into this Operation. One does not *Per Saltum* come to this *Degree*. Methinks, All these Things conspire, to Proclaim a *Saving work of Repentance* begun in this Penitent, before his *Last Hour* came upon him. However, *This* I am sure they do; and *this* is what I mainly aim at: they utterly destroy

belonged to destroy all the *Assurance*, which any Presuming
 manner has, that this Man did *not Repent* until
 his *Last Hour* was arrived unto him. They
 have him therefore without any *Assurance*, that
any One in the World, who disobey'd calls
 Repent until the *Last Hour*, did it *then* Effectually,
 and found Mercy with God.

I do not affirm that my Arguments, for the
 more *Early Repentance* of my Penitent, are absolutely
Decisive, and infallibly *Conclusive*; but
 I think them enough to retund the *Confident*
Profanity of them, who encourage the *Delay*
 their Conversion to God, from the *Pattern*
 the *Thief*, Repenting and Accepted on the
 cross. And it may be further observed unto
 them, that the Holy and Worthy Divines, who
 take up with the common Opinion, and Glorify
 God, in the Highest Apprehensions of *Miracles*
 in the Sudden *Producing* and *Ripening* of
 his Repentance, do still with mighty Energy
 thunderstrike, that Profane *Abuse* of the Example.
 They tell you, Ye Fools, That if it be a
Pattern, yet it is a *Pattern* without a *Promise*.
 And as One of the Ancients Expresses it, *Ad*
insequendam Fidem non fuit illi Extrema Hora,
Prima; they tell you, That it might more
 properly be said, He came in at the *First Hour*,
 and at the *Last Hour*; for he had not Enjoy'd
 the *Means of Grace* before, nor Sinned against
 them, as they do, who embolden themselves to
 sin, from what was done for him. They tell
 you, The most you can make, if the Example
 granted you, is, *One Example* in all the Bible.

But then Mr. *Greenham* smartly upbraids the Rashness of them who hope for the like; You may as well Spur an *Ass* to make him Speak, because *Balaam's* once did Speak with the Voice of Man. They also tell you, That the Conversion of this Penitent was at a *Season*, the like to which will never again occur in the World. It was an *Extraordinary Time*. As Mr. *Fennel* notes, The Day of a *Kings Coronation*, sets many Factors at *Liberty*, which at another Time could not escape the *Death* which belongs unto them. The most astonishing *Expression* of the *Divine Mercy*, that ever was given to the World, was now Exhibiting. It is Congruous enough, that there should now in One Penitent be a most astonishing *Monument* of it. Our Penitent stood close by the *Great Sacrifice*. If there should be an *Uncommon Experiment* of the Vertue in the *Balsom*, just as it was Preparing, it is not without some Congruity. Our Great Redeemer was now *Triumphing openly over the Powers of Darkness*. If in the *Field of Battel*, he actually rescued *Prey* from the Mouth of the Adversary; the Congruity was yet more beautiful. Mr. *Beverly* speaks well upon it. No Sinner in the World, will ever see such a Time again! Briefly, It was a Time fill'd with *Miracles*. One utters his Mind after this awful manner, on this occasion. You may as well *Expect Christ to be Crucified again* as *Expect* such another Instance of such unusual *Mercy*. I would not say, quite so. But certainly to put off *Repentance* upon an Expectation of being received at the *Last Hour*, because One once in such rare circumstances was so; 'tis to do *Presumptuously*, and to reproach the Lord.

In fine ; I should be as much offended, as the Martyr *Bilney*, to hear any one discouraging an *Old Penitent*, from Hopes of Pardoning Mercy. But it is as great an offence, to hear the folly and madness, and Egregious Nonsense of a Sinner *Delaying* to become a *Penitent*, because there was a *Thief*, that at the *Last Hour* found a Pardon. I break off with Saying, That if this *Penitent* might from the *Paradise* where our Saviour has Lodg'd him, now Preach unto us, we should certainly hear him saying, *I desire, that among them who delay their Conversion to God, my Example may no more be for their Ungodly Purpose insisted on ! —*

F I N I S.

*This Vacant Page will be well-filled, with an
Hymn of my excellent Friend Mr. WATTS,
Entitled, A Complaint of Ingratitude.*

IS this the Kind Return,
And these the Thanks we owe ?
Thus to abuse Eternal Love
Whence all our Blessings flow ?

To what a Stubborn Frame
Has Sin reduc'd our Mind ?
What Strange rebellious Wretches we,
And God as Strangely Kind ?

On us He bids the Sun
Shed His Reviving Rays,
For us the Skies their Circles run
To Lengthen out our Dayes.

The Brutes obey their God,
And bow their Necks to Men ;
But we, more base, more brutish things,
Reject His easy Reign.

Turn, Turn us, Mighty God,
And Mould our Souls afresh,
Break, Sovereign Grace, these Hearts of Stone,
And give us Hearts of Flesh.

Let Old Ingratitude
Provoke our Weeping Eyes,
And Hourly as new Mercies fall
Let Hourly Thanks arise.

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